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Conducting Justice and Corrections Research for Effective Policy Making

Orleans Parish Prison Ten-Year Inmate Population Projection¹

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Major Findings and the OPP Base Projection Summary

Summary of Key Trends Impacting OPP Admissions

1. Prior to Katrina the Orleans Parish population had gradually declined from 483,663 to 455,188. The at-risk population was also declining at that time.
2. Post Katrina the Orleans Parish population has returned to approximately 80% of its former size. It is not clear the extent to which the population will continue to grow.
3. The repopulation of Orleans Parish has resulted in a population that has a higher rate of home ownership, higher education level, lower poverty rate, and higher median household income. All of these factors are associated with lower crime rates.
4. Despite significant increases in the Orleans Parish Prison (OPP), both the number and rate of serious crimes reported to police have significantly declined.
5. The number of arrests have declined from their peak of nearly 140,000 in 2004 to 92,500 in 2009.
6. More recently, the first ten months of 2010 show a 18% decrease in arrests as compared to the first ten months of 2009 – a drop of 14,646 arrests.
7. The current demographic trends of the Parish as well as the declining reported crime and arrest trends suggest a downward trend in OPP admissions.

Recent Trends in the OPP Prisoner Population

1. The OPP currently consists of approximately 3,200 inmates who fall into several distinct legal categories.
2. 44% of the daily OPP population are in pretrial status with the vast majority of them being people charged with one or more felony crimes.

3. The other large group consists of persons who have been sentenced to state prison but are being housed in the OPP (currently there are about 1,025 such prisoners or about 1/3rd of the entire OPP population).
4. The number of admissions and releases peaked in about September 2009 and have since declined consistent with crime and arrest trends.
5. More recently, OPP admissions for the first nine months of 2010 are 20% below what they were for the first months in 2009 – a drop of nearly 10,000 admissions.
6. If one removes the DPS&C inmate population from the data the remainder of the OPP population has been slightly declining which again is consistent with the arrest, booking and release data trends.

Comparisons With Other Parishes

1. Orleans has a significantly higher incarceration rate compared to the other three Parishes even when one takes into account the violent and total crime rates.
2. If the OPP prisoner population was strictly a function of violent or total crimes rates and the same criminal justice policies as exist in East Baton Rouge, Caddo, the OPP population would be as high as 1,426 (Caddo rates).

Detailed Assessment of the OPP Admissions and Releases

1. During the last 12 months, there were 59,566 admissions that were generated by 42,592 people.
2. The average LOS for all releases was 19.6 days, which produces a projected OPP daily population of 3,196.
3. The overall number of admissions, releases and the LOS are quite accurate and can be used to make a valid base projection. There are difficulties in determining the exact charge and basis for release as persons admitted to the OPP have multiple charges. But despite these data issues, the basic legal statutes and methods of release are relatively accurate.
4. The largest proportion of admissions and releases are people with an outstanding warrant (over 20,000 or 1/3rd of all releases). The vast majority of these warrants are issued by the Jefferson Parish largely for missed court dates and FTAs.

5. When the 20,000 warrant releases are excluded, the overall LOS increases to 28.7 days, which is more typical of a major urban jail.
6. The vast majority of the releases that are not warrants are exiting the OPP in some form of pretrial status (92%).
7. Males and Blacks have significantly longer LOS. Specifically, males have an overall LOS of 22 days versus 10 days for females. For Blacks, they have a LOS of 23 days versus 11 days for whites and 5 days for Hispanics. These LOS differentials result in these categories of inmates “stacking up” in the OPP population.
8. When one controls for the type of charge one is booked for, Blacks continue to show a longer LOS although the overall difference is reduced.
9. A more detailed study should be conducted to determine the basis for the longer LOS for Blacks, which is a strong contributor to the size of the OPP population.
10. This finding coupled with the large number of warrant releases means that law enforcement and court processing are the two driving forces in determining the current and future number of OPP admissions and length of stays.
11. Pretrial felons produce the largest share of the OPP population. Efficiencies in expediting those cases would have a large effect on the OPP population. For example, if the LOS was reduced by an average of 10 days, the OPP population would drop by about 250 prisoners.

DPS&C State Inmates Housed and Released in OPP

1. In 2009 there were 1,143 people who were released from the Department of Public Safety and Corrections who have been sentenced to DPS&C by the Orleans Courts.
2. The overall length of stay for these people was 3.0 years with an average sentence of 5.5 years.
3. Of that number 726 (or 64% of all Orleans sentenced inmates) were released from the OPP system as opposed to other DPS&C state prison facilities.

Base Projection

The following key assumptions are being made for the ten year base projection which reflect current trends and criminal justice policies as noted above:

1. OPP pretrial misdemeanor and warrant admissions will continue to gradually decline over the decade at a rate of 5% per year. This assumption is based on implemented initiatives that focus on misdemeanor crimes that will continue to reduce misdemeanor admissions plus declining crime and arrest rates.
2. The methods of release and the associated average LOS for each release type for the pretrial misdemeanor and warrant admissions population will remain constant over this ten-year projection.
3. The OPP pretrial felon admissions and locally sentenced populations will remain constant at 2010 level throughout the ten year forecast.
4. The methods of release and the associated average LOS for each release type for the pretrial felon admissions and locally sentenced populations will remain constant over this ten-year projection.

Based on these assumptions there will be continued but slight decrease in the local (non-state prison) Orleans prisoner population now estimated at 2,339 to about 2,200 by the end of 2012 and continue to decline to 1,953 by the end of 2020.

The state DPS&C inmate population, under current policy is held constant at 950 throughout the ten-year forecast based on current policies. Thus the overall OPP population will reach 2,903 by the 2018.

If one adds a 7.5% peaking factor to accommodate seasonal fluctuations and special housing needs of the inmate population the bed capacity needs would be 3,121 beds.

One final observation should be made. As time goes on, the base projection will inevitably become increasingly inaccurate as new policies and laws are introduced. For this reason the base projection needs to be revised and updated on at least an annual basis to ensure the Parish does not find itself with a crowded jail system.

**Orleans Parish Prison Base Forecast
CY 2010-2020
By Major Subpopulations**

CY	Warrants	Pretrial Misd/Other	Pretrial Felony	Local Sentenced	Sub- Total	DPS&C	Grand Total
Sept. 2010	114	597	1,359	169	2,239	950	3,189
2010	101	591	1,364	162	2,218	950	3,168
2011	93	582	1,384	161	2,220	950	3,170
2012	91	563	1,381	166	2,201	950	3,151
2013	84	546	1,396	165	2,191	950	3,141
2014	79	522	1,383	162	2,146	950	3,096
2015	77	487	1,357	163	2,084	950	3,034
2016	73	470	1,349	161	2,053	950	3,003
2017	66	448	1,372	168	2,054	950	3,004
2018	63	427	1,350	165	2,005	950	2,955
2019	65	392	1,349	158	1,964	950	2,914
2020	58	369	1,360	165	1,952	950	2,902
With 7.5% Peaking	62	397	1,462	177	2,098	1,021	3,120

Introduction

This report provides a ten-year projection of the Orleans Parish Prison (OPP) population to be housed by the Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office. The study was requested by the City of New Orleans and was funded by the National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice.

At issue was to determine the need to construct a new jail facility or facilities that would have sufficient capacity to properly house and manage persons who were incarcerated under current state and local laws and criminal justice policies. Mayor Mitch Landrieu signed an executive order establishing a Criminal Justice Working Group, an official Mayoral Advisory Committee, which was tasked with reviewing plans and information relating to the size of the Orleans Parish Prison complex. This report is being submitted to the Task Force as part of its work to make recommendations to Mayor Landrieu.

As will be emphasized throughout the report, the current and future size of a jail population is largely the product of a number of factors that are beyond the control of the Sheriff. Demographic, socio-economic, crime, arrest and court processing (among others) are factors that contribute to the two major forces that produce a jail population -- admissions and length of stay (or LOS). What this initial report does is to document those trends and estimate the long-term effects of **current** trends on the projected size of the Orleans jail population. This initial estimate is referred to as the "base" projection.

A subsequent report will provide estimates of how the base projection may be impacted by two major reforms or initiatives:

1. Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections (DPS&C) state prisoner population now housed at the OPP; and,
2. Implementation of a Pre-Trial Release Program.

In completing this study, JFA relied extensively upon data provided by the Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office and New Orleans Police Department.² Data were also provided by the Vera Institute, which has been conducting a number of studies of current police and criminal justice practices and initiatives. The DPS&C provided data on state inmates housed in the OPP and those sentenced to state prison each year from the Orleans Parish courts.

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Projection Policy Simulation Model

Inmate and correctional population projections should not be seen as magic boxes used to predict the future, but instead as tools for understanding the origin and direction of prisoner population changes based on current and alternative criminal justice policies. They are used most effectively to predict future population levels and to analyze the impact of new and proposed changes in laws, policies and administrative practices.

To meet this need, the JFA has developed the Prophet Simulation Software for simulating and forecasting pre-trial, sentenced prisoner, probation, parole and any other correctional populations. This model can be used in a number of ways. Institutional planners may use it to project future population levels to better prepare for increases or decreases in the growing demand for scarce bed space and programmatic resources. Policy makers can foresee the effects of changes in current laws or policies prior to their implementation. Researchers can “sort out” and isolate the effects of specific practices that may otherwise be obscured in the complex web of criminal justice activity

This model has been used since 1982 by the JFA staff to assist numerous state and local jurisdictions across the country (including the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections) to provide support for correctional population projections. The model has been used successfully to generate prisoner population forecasts in over 50 state and local jurisdictions across the country. It was cited by the GAO as one of the nation’s most sophisticated and well-established projection models available to correctional agencies.

Technical Attributes of the Model

Because no two criminal justice systems are the same, there is no single Prophet model. Instead, the software allows analysts to customize and construct models that mimic the actual flow of prisoners through systems, based on the unique law enforcement, sentencing structure and policy environments of the target system. It is best to think of the Prophet simulation software as a “shell” or beginning structure that can be constructed in any fashion.

The Prophet Simulation model is an example of a stochastic entity simulation model. It is stochastic in the sense that the model is conceptually designed around the movement of individual cases (offenders) into, through, and out of correctional populations defined by the user. The model also makes use of the Monte Carlo simulation techniques by adding an element of randomness to the simulation model.